

Identifies cues

Green – Identifies and responds appropriately to patient cues in an accurate and perceptive manner

Red – Fails to identify cues and/or fails to respond or signpost any cues identified

About this task

Identifying cues, (verbal and/or non-verbal) helps the doctor to understand the patient's ideas and concerns about the presenting problem. Patient cues will invariably offer 'clues' to information that is relevant to the diagnosis and therefore form an important part of data gathering. For example, a patient who talks slowly and with a depressed tone, may be suffering from low mood. A patient's opening statement will often contain verbal cues such as - "*I was wondering if my headaches needed to be investigated*" or - "*I've been feeling very down since my father died*". This almost always provides valuable information about why the patient has attended.

Audio consultations

It is sometimes difficult to detect cues on the telephone - you cannot see the patient so it is very easy to miss out on non-verbal cues, and even verbal cues may be missed if there is a poor signal or interference on the line. So - you need to carefully practice the skills involved in detecting cues (as below) and be prepared to ask additional questions if you suspect a patient is presenting you with a cue.

Educational activities

Activity 1: Watch a series of your videos with your trainer - write down all the possible cues you can see in these consultations and compare your list with your trainer. Remember to do some videos focussing the camera on the patient and note non-verbal cues as well as verbal cues.

Activity 2: If there are cues that you did not notice (but your trainer did) discuss with your trainer what prompted the insight that a particular verbal or non-verbal behaviour was a cue. Make a list of these insights.

Activity 3: Now keep practicing the skill of cue detection using the insights obtained from Activity 1 and 2. After a while, repeat the comparison exercise with your trainer to see if you are improving.

Activity 4: Remember the huge importance of being curious (Refer to the Toolkit section on '*Listens and shows curiosity*')

Activity 5: Now spend some time working on your consultations and videos, trying to identify more cues and discuss this with your trainer.

Audio consultations

Listen to a series of your audio consultations with your trainer or an experienced consulter. Each of you write down whenever they think the patient is presenting a cue. Now compare lists. Are you failing to detect cues that your experienced colleague detected? Now write down what it was that alerted your colleague to the cues

that you missed. Using this information, practice the skill of 'cue detection' on further audio consultations.

Now compare your success rate in detecting cues between audio consultations and face-to-face consultations. Are you better at detecting cues in face-to-face consultations or audio consultations?

Reflective exercises

Exercise 1: Why do you think there is a difference between cue detection in audio consultations and face-to-face consultations? What could you do to reduce or even eliminate this difference?

Related interpersonal skills

Practicing and developing the following interpersonal skills will allow the task of '*Identifies cues*' to be achieved more effectively:

- Generates rapport
- Uses open questions appropriately
- Clarifies and explores cues offered
- Listens and shows curiosity
- Shares and uses ICE in plan
- Negotiates and uses psycho-social information in plan
- Supports in decision making

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